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9 March 1977

MEMORANDUM

The Turkish Aegean Army and its Amphibious Capability*

The Turkish Aegean Army is as much a political as a military instrument. [redacted]

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[redacted] More because of geography than anything else, the Greeks cannot defend all their islands in the eastern Aegean; [redacted]

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The Aegean Army, at very least, acts as a brake on any inclination on the part of the Greeks to undertake [redacted] action of their own. They have to think longer and harder, for example, in weighing the merits of moving against a Turkish ship taking seismic soundings over contested portions of the Aegean seabed. Understandably, the Greeks are concerned that the Aegean Army also has the capability for sudden, unprovoked attack on the Greek islands.

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[redacted] there are powerful disincentives to such use.

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[redacted] the precise number of landing craft supporting the Aegean Army is a good deal less important than the Turkish capability to bring to bear an overwhelming preponderance of strength against the Greek islands nearest the Turkish mainland.

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* This memorandum was requested by the Counselor of the Department of State. The Acting NIO/WE chaired a working group which considered a draft prepared in CIA's Office of Strategic Research. The US Country Teams in Athens, Ankara, and Istanbul also provided useful comments on the draft, but the paper has not been formally coordinated within the Intelligence Community.

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1. Greek leaders say they are convinced that Turkey is in a dangerously expansionist mood. However debatable this proposition may be.

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it would be mistaken to assume that Greek concern is artificially contrived or paranoid. It is genuine and would be felt by responsible leaders of any country in a position similar to the one the Greeks find themselves in vis-a-vis Turkey.

2. Greek concern finds its origin in centuries of conflict between Greek and Turk; but Caramanlis need not go very far back in history to find grounds for worry. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus in July 1974, Turkey's claim to equal mineral and air space rights in the Aegean, and Turkish seismic exploration over contested portions of the Aegean seabed form a more immediate backdrop for the Greek conclusion that the Turks are in an aggressive, expansionist phase. That conclusion has prompted the Greeks to fortify several of the Greek islands nearest Turkey, despite international treaty stipulations that most of them remain demilitarized.

3. The Turks, of course, see the situation quite differently. They argue that their intervention on Cyprus was in accordance with international agreements. They also insist that their claims in the Aegean are well founded and that their seismic exploration does not violate customary international practice. The Turks draw a sharp contrast between these actions and Greece's fortification of several of its islands in the eastern Aegean, for example, which Turkey sees as a clear-cut violation of international treaties. What bothers the Turks most is their perception that the very substantial military edge they once had over the Greeks has been seriously eroded. (This has largely to do with what the Greeks have gotten, and what the Turks have not, in the way of arms from the US over the past two years.)

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4. Ankara's attempts to justify its actions on Cyprus and in the Aegean have done little to allay Greek concern about Turkey's recent behavior, which to the Greeks is prima facie evidence of aggressive intent.

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No wonder the Greeks feel threatened by the Turkish Aegean Army and its amphibious capability--particularly since some Greek islands in the eastern Aegean would be virtually impossible to defend against a determined onslaught from the Turkish mainland.

Turkish Capabilities

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The Turkish Aegean Army

6. The Aegean Army was established with headquarters near Izmir in July 1975. This followed a period of considerable tension between Greece and Turkey, including Turkish intervention on Cyprus and Greek fortification and reinforcement of some of the Greek islands in the eastern Aegean.

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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this
Army is basically a planning headquarters to which
some training units have been assigned.

8. We also believe that some 30,000-40,000
combat-qualified troops are assigned to the Aegean
Army, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Moreover, with army headquarters
communication, and professional military staffs already
in place, the Army could become an operational combat
command in a matter of days. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Amphibious Capability of the Aegean Army

9. The Aegean Army has a 3,000-man marine regi-
ment trained for amphibious operations. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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14. That number of vessels would probably be enough to carry the Aegean Army's 3,000-man marine regiment and could move out with little or no warning. Moving additional amphibious vessels to the Eastern Aegean would give the Turks a greater capability, but would run high risk of detection by the Greeks and the US.

If The Turkish Aegean Army Attacked

15. The location of the Greek Islands in the Eastern Aegean so far from the Greek mainland makes them extremely difficult to defend. Turkey could probably occupy one or more of the major Greek islands without having to draw from units facing Greece in Thrace. But the Turks would have to pay a high cost in personnel and equipment, particularly if Greek defenses, which have been considerably strengthened, were alerted and put up stiff resistance.

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18. In past years there was little doubt that the numerical superiority of the Turkish air force would ensure Turkish air superiority in support of amphibious operations in the Eastern Aegean. Now the Turks would find it more difficult. Due largely to recent restrictions on US arms supply, over half of Turkey's older model fighter aircraft are grounded by a shortage of spare parts, while Greece continues to get new deliveries of sophisticated aircraft from the US and France. Even so, the Greek air force would probably not be able to establish the local dominance that would be required to prevent the Turks from taking an island or two.

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~~Regional Intelligence Officers~~
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NOTE FOR: Admiral Turner

SUBJECT : The Turkish Aegean Army and its
Amphibious Capability

1. Attached is a copy of a paper which we sent to State this morning. It will be used to help prepare Clark Clifford for closed-door briefings tomorrow and Friday with the foreign relations committees.

2. We were asked to address specific questions arising in connection with the recent Clifford mission and this largely accounts for the structure and length of the paper. Time did not permit formal coordination within the Community, but it seems a sure bet we will be addressing this issue soon again and all will have a chance to weigh in. Meanwhile, we are sending copies to DIA, INR, and NSA for comment.

3. The paper begins with a three-paragraph précis which attempts to put the issues in proper perspective.


Acting National Intelligence Officer
for Western Europe

cc: DDCI
D/DCI/NI

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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

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National Intelligence Officers

9 March 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Matthew Nimetz
Counselor Designate
Department of State

SUBJECT : The Turkish Aegean Army and
its Amphibious Capability

The attached memorandum was prepared in response to your recent request, relayed to us by George Harris of INR. The paper is based on a draft prepared in CIA's Office of Strategic Research.


Acting National Intelligence Officer
for Western Europe

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STATUS SHEET

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State

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